

VZCZCXRO1927
PP RUEHAST
DE RUEHAH #1165/01 3021243
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 291243Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9612
RUEHAST/USO ALMATY 5479

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 ASHGABAT 001165

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CA (SNELSIRE), SCA/RA, INL (BUHLER)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN 2007-2008 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR) PART I, DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL (EUR,
SCA)

Ref: SECSTATE 136780

I. Summary:

Turkmenistan remains a transshipment route for traffickers seeking to smuggle contraband to Turkish, Russian and European markets from neighboring drug-producing countries, primarily Afghanistan and Iran. Turkmenistan is not a major producer or source country for illegal drugs or precursor chemicals. Turkmenistan shares a rugged and remote 744-kilometer border with Afghanistan as well as a 992-kilometer boundary with Iran. Most of its illegal drug seizures occur along Turkmenistan's borders with Afghanistan and Iran.

Counternarcotics efforts are carried out by the Ministry of National Security (MNB), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the State Customs Service (SCS), the State Border Guards Service (SBS), the State Agency for the Registration of Foreigners, and the Prosecutor General's Office. The MNB's primary responsibility is to interdict illegal drugs on the borders while the MVD deals with drug related crimes inside the country. The State Counternarcotics Coordination Commission (SCCC) at the Cabinet of Ministers is an inter-departmental body responsible for coordinating the activities of concerned government departments. The SCCC also coordinates counternarcotics assistance received from the international community. It has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the government's "National Program on Fighting Illegal Drug Trafficking and Assistance to Drug and Psychotropic Substance Addicts for 2006-2010." According to Government of Turkmenistan statistics, law enforcement officers seized a total of 1,417 kg of illegal narcotics in the first six months of 2007.

On June 22, 2007, at the Cabinet of Ministers meeting, newly-elected President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov publicly stated that the fight against drugs is one of the priorities of the Government of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan continues to increase cooperation with international organizations and diplomatic missions present in Turkmenistan; however, its law enforcement agencies are hampered by a widespread lack of resources, training and equipment. Mounting evidence, together with increased contacts with government officials and non-governmental organizations, strongly suggests that domestic drug abuse is steadily increasing, although concrete statistics are not publicly available. Turkmenistan remains vulnerable to financial fraud and money laundering schemes due to its dual exchange rate. Turkmenistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of country:

Turkmenistan remains a key transit country for the smuggling of narcotics and precursor chemicals. The flow of opiates from Afghanistan, such as heroin, opium and other opium-based drugs destined for markets in Turkey, Russia and Europe, enter Turkmenistan from Afghanistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan. The bulk of the Government of Turkmenistan's law enforcement resources and

manpower are directed toward stopping the flow of drugs from Afghanistan and Iran. Common methods of transporting illegal narcotics include concealment in cargo or passenger vehicles, deliveries by pedestrian carriers or animal transport, and in some cases by concealment in the body cavities or stomach of humans and animals. Turkmenistan's law enforcement efforts at the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border are focused more on interdicting smuggled commercial goods than on narcotics, thus providing an attractive transshipment route. Commercial truck traffic from Iran continues to be heavy, and Caspian Sea ferry traffic from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan and Russia continues to be a viable smuggling route. On December 21, 2006, Turkmenistan's leader, Saparmurat Niyazov, passed away. Newly-elected President Berdimuhamedov on several occasions stressed the importance of countering the flow of narcotics. In June 2007, on the eve of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, the president stated that Turkmenistan should declare a large-scale war against drugs and counternarcotics efforts must continue until this threat is completely eradicated.

III. Country actions against drugs:

Policy initiatives:

In January 2007 during his presidential campaign, Berdimuhamedov called on all citizens of Turkmenistan to fight drug trafficking and accentuated the importance of improving border, customs and law enforcement capacities. About drug demand reduction, he encouraged civil society and public organizations to increase their role in raising awareness among youth. In April 2006, the government adopted a national multi-year plan for counternarcotics activities, the "National Program on Fighting Illegal Drug Trafficking and Assistance to Drug and Psychotropic Substance Addicts for 2006-2010" (2006-2010 National Drug Program). This program supersedes the

ASHGABAT 00001165 002 OF 004

2001-2005 National Drug Program, and includes: increased regional cooperation to prevent drug and precursor trafficking, prevention of drug-related crimes committed by minors, enhanced technology-based border security, enhanced training for law enforcement agencies to combat organized crime, increased counterterrorism efforts, and training on drug trafficking and money laundering. The national program also addresses drug demand issues. The plan has a research and treatment of drug addiction and HIV/AIDS component and includes a national survey on the spread of drug use and HIV/AIDS within target populations. The plan calls for the creation of drug abuse "hot lines." The government specifically includes in the 2006-2010 program continued cooperation with U.S. government programs as well as with international organizations and diplomatic missions. In August 2004, the government introduced a new draft criminal procedure code in an effort to transform the Soviet-era criminal justice process; the parliament has not yet adopted the new code. In September 2007, Turkmenistan hosted a Paris Pact Expert Round Table on the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus in which 16 countries and 13 international organizations participated. In his address to conference participants, President Berdimuhamedov stated that the decisive and uncompromising struggle against drugs is one of Turkmenistan's priority issues.

Law enforcement efforts:

The government continues to give priority to counternarcotics law enforcement, and President Berdimuhamedov has paid special attention to improving technical capacity of the law enforcement agencies. For example, a military academy for MNB and SBS officers was opened, the MVD received new vehicles and equipment, and Customs started operating the mobile Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS) that was purchased through a Chinese Government-provided grant. Law enforcement agencies with counternarcotics enforcement authority received equipment and training from the United States and international organizations. In 2007, members of diplomatic missions and international organizations were invited to witness three inter-agency drug destruction events. The government is enhancing border security efforts and plans to start construction of a new border crossing station in Bekdash (on the Kazakh border) in 2007. The United States sponsored the construction of two new

border crossing checkpoint facilities on the Iranian border in November 2006 and on the border with Afghanistan in August 2007. Construction of a third facility on the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border will commence soon. The EU is also planning on building a new checkpoint on the border with Uzbekistan. In January 2007, the European Commission and UN Central Asia Drug Action Program assisted in establishing a Drug Profiling Unit at Ashgabat's International Airport by renovating an office and providing special equipment. The Customs Service solicited support from international and diplomatic missions to develop and improve a customs training facility. The U.S. and British governments are co-sponsoring a Customs-hosted interagency English language course to equip law enforcement officers with language skills requisite for participation in international conferences and training. Turkmenistan's border forces are moderately effective in detecting and interdicting narcotics. The government reported that 1,417 kilograms of illegal narcotics were seized on Turkmenistan's borders during the first six months of 2007. The "Adalat" (Justice) weekly newspaper is the only local paper that occasionally publishes information on law enforcement agencies' activities related to illicit drug trade activities.

Corruption:

In an effort to oversee law enforcement activities, President Berdimuhamedov established the State Commission on Reviewing Citizens Complaints Related to Law Enforcement Agencies Activities on February 19, 2007. The Commission reports directly to the president and monitors unlawful activities by law enforcement officials. The government does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic and psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances as a matter of government policy. However, law enforcement officials' low salaries, combined with their broad general powers, foster an environment in which corruption occurs. A general distrust of the police by the public, fueled by evidence of police officers soliciting bribes, indicates a problematic level of corruption in law enforcement. Payments to lower level officials at border crossing points to facilitate passage of smuggled goods frequently occur. Reports persist that senior government officials are directly linked to the drug trade. Stating that corruption is widespread in almost all units of the MVD -- including in the departments working on economic crimes, organized crime and others -- President Berdimuhamedov publicly accused MVD employees of corruption in October 2007. In 2007, President Berdimuhamedov fired and replaced his Minister of Internal Affairs twice due to corruption allegations.

Agreements and treaties:

ASHGABAT 00001165 003 OF 004

Turkmenistan is a party to the 1998 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention and its 1972 protocol, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Turkmenistan and the United States signed a letter of agreement for provision of U.S. government counternarcotics assistance in September 2001. In June 2007, the governments of Turkmenistan and Iran agreed to form a special joint committee to combat narcotics trafficking. The next month, the presidents of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan signed a joint communique noting the need to further develop their counternarcotics and counterterrorism cooperation. Also in July 2007, President Berdimuhamedov signed an agreement between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan on the establishment of a UN-led Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center. In September 2007, the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan signed a joint communique that acknowledged the need to further develop cooperation in counternarcotics and against psychotropic substances. In the same month, the United States signed the second Amendment to the Letter of Agreement for additional funding of U.S. counternarcotics assistance. Turkmenistan is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and its Protocols against Migrant Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Illegal Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms.

Cultivation/production:

Turkmenistan is not a significant producer of illegal drugs, although small-scale opium and marijuana cultivation is thought to occur in remote mountain and desert areas. Each spring, the government conducts limited aerial inspections of outlying areas in search of illegal poppy cultivation. Upon discovery, law enforcement officials eradicate opium crops. According to the State Counternarcotics Coordination Committee, law enforcement officials conduct Operation "Mak" ("Poppy") twice a year to locate and destroy poppy fields.

Drug flow/transit:

Turkmenistan remains a primary transit corridor for smuggling organizations seeking to transport opium and heroin to markets in Turkey, Russia and the whole of Europe, and for the shipment of precursor chemicals to Afghanistan. There are land, air and sea routes through Turkmenistan's territory. The government's efforts to improve border crossing stations during 2007 could lead to higher seizure rates or the opening of new trafficking routes if traffickers adapt. Turkmenistan's two major border control agencies, the SCS and the SBS, have received increased attention and funding for their drug enforcement duties. Systemic deficits in necessary equipment, training, resources, and facilities will take time to improve. Border crossing points with rudimentary inspection facilities for screening vehicle traffic and without reliable communications systems have been identified by the Government of Turkmenistan and are being improved. However, Turkmenistan is likely to continue to serve as a major transit route for illegal drugs and precursors.

Domestic programs/Demand Reduction:

In his election platform throughout January 2007, President Berdimuhamedov paid special attention to the problem of domestic drug addiction, calling it a "disaster for all mankind". The President asserted that society, especially the elderly, should play a significant role in preventing youth from using drugs. Currently, the Ministry of Health operates seven drug treatment clinics: one in the capital of Ashgabat, one in Serdar city, and one in each of the five provincial administrative centers. Narcotics addicts can receive treatment at these clinics without revealing their identity and all clinic visits are kept confidential. Drug addiction is a prosecutable crime with jail sentences for convicted persons, although judicial officials usually sentence addicts to treatment. It is still difficult to obtain any statistical information about the number of drug addicts in Turkmenistan. However, President Berdimuhamedov reported in March 2007 that the number of crimes connected to drug addiction had increased. Although not yet implemented, the government is currently considering internationally-funded prevention programs. A strategy for counternarcotics efforts and assistance to drug addicts is included within the framework of the 2006-2010 National Drug Program.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs:

The Road Ahead:

Staying engaged with all Turkmenistan's counternarcotics enforcement agencies is necessary to encourage a successful effort against narcotics trafficking. Bilateral cooperation is expected to continue, and the U.S. government will expand counternarcotics law

ASHGABAT 00001165 004 OF 004

enforcement agency training at the working level. As both Turkmenistan and U.S. officials identify areas for improved counternarcotics efforts, the United States will provide an appropriate, integrated and coordinated response. The U.S. government also will encourage the government of Turkmenistan to institute long-term demand reduction efforts and will foster supply reduction through interdiction training, law enforcement institution building, the promotion of regional cooperation, and an exchange of drug-related intelligence.

1V. Chemical control issues:

The 2004 Law on Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors regulates the Turkmen government's policy on controlling drug precursor chemicals. According to the law, the government controls and restricts trafficking of precursors that are included on the special list approved by the President of Turkmenistan. The Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan is responsible for overall state regulation on precursor control. The Cabinet also determines responsibilities of other government agencies involved in precursor control and fighting illegal trafficking.

HOAGLAND